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The following was written by the Rev. Eugene L. Stockwell, a missionary of the Methodist Church in Salto, Uruguay. Mr. Stockwell, who has a degree in law, practised law in New York before entering Union Theological Seminary in New York. He has been a missionary in Uruguay since 1953. The following letter describes his work in radio evangelism.

It is often said that indifference is the religion of Uruguay. Since the separation of church and state early in the century, the government has actively fostered this indifference. All religious holidays have been retained, but given new names and meanings: Holy Week is now Tourist Week, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is Beach Day, Christmas is Family Day. Towns named after saints have been renamed, usually with patriotic names. An important daily newspaper refers to God with a small "g". To ignore religion is taken for granted. The official indifference is matched by popular indifference. Most Uruguayans say, "I believe in God. I am a Catholic. But I do not believe in the priests". Freely translated this means: "I think that some supernatural power exists. I was baptized in the Roman church as a baby and have rarely been there since. The loose living of the Roman priests disgusts me, as does their desire to milk the population of its money. Therefore, I have nothing to do with any religion. I respect everyone's beliefs. As for myself, I repeat that I believe in this

supernatural power. Now let's change the subject".

Protestantism's challenge in Uruguay is to break through this indifference, to stir to consciousness the deep seated religious longings of the individual, and to offer some satisfying answers to the inevitable questions about the meaning and purpose of life which every man shares, whatever his surface indifference. To date, if success be measured in terms of membership statistics, church attendance, etc., Protestantism has had relatively little success. It would be optimistic to claim that more than one-half of one percent of the population is Protestant, though Protestantism has been at work here for a century.

How to break through this indifference to the mind of Uruguay? The great majority of the population will not consider entering a Protestant church. Open air meetings draw little interest. Sermons broadcast to passersby on the street stop very few. The best way to gain a hearing is by means of the radio. Uruguay enjoys complete freedom of speech and radio time is quite inexpensive. Church leaders have sometimes been very skeptical as to the positive results radio preaching brings, but none deny that it is the best way to present the Christian gospel to most Uruguayan homes. Various denominations have had radio programs for several years now. What follows is the experience of this writer with a very modest program broadcast over a small station in Salto, a city in the northwest corner of Uruguay.

My predecessor had been threatened with loss of air time at the end of 1952 because, it was alleged, he injected political opinions into his radio sermons. My purpose, early in 1953, was to base our radio program on an analysis of typical personal problems, suggesting religious resources that might be helpful. This seemed quite non-political, and was allowed air time fifteen minutes each Sunday morning. The personal problem approach was motivated by the desire to strike listeners at the point of felt need, with a view to moving on to more basic needs which might find aid and solution in a vital Christian faith. Across the past three years the programs have moved alternately from analysis of specific problems to a study of the relevance of the Christian faith to daily living. On the one hand the programs have faced up to such common problems as a sense of monotony in daily work, the frustrations of family life, the dread of suffering, the fear of death, and the search for happiness. On the other, there have been presentations of the central tenets of the Christian faith, series of programs on the Lord's Prayer and on the Beatitudes, studies of the parables of Jesus, and attempts to relate the mission of the church to the lives of the people.

Has this approach succeeded in breaking through the indifference above mentioned? There is no doubt that a vast audience is reached. Undoubtedly most listeners belong to the mass of people whose religious outlook is summarized in the first paragraph above. A flood of correspondence has reached us requesting Protestant pamphlets, New Testaments and the devotional guide, The Upper Room. Many write to express their gratitude for the program. Some even write in presenting specific personal problems: should I marry a Roman Catholic, how can I learn to pray, etc. To be sure, much of this correspondence comes from Protestants who are far away from any organized church. Also, interestingly enough, many letters came from neighbouring Argentine, where in recent years Peron's dictatorship forbid Protestants the use of radio time.



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A rather spectacular result of the program, though not due solely to it, was the donation to the Methodist Church of Salto of a very valuable property as the site for its future church.

Some tentative conclusions we have reached in these three years of work are the following:

As to method:

- 1) The use of good choir music at the beginning and end of each program attracts many.
- 2) The radio sermon must not be too long. Eight minutes is sufficient.
- 3) The first two or three sentences of the radio sermon are all important, and must be designed to gain the immediate interest of the listener.
- 4) Every program should include a cordial invitation to the listener to write in soliciting literature, information, help, etc.
- 5) Every request from a listener must be answered fully and promptly.

As to content:

- 1) Roughly the first half of each program should be devoted to an analysis of some aspect of the human situation which leads the listener to feel: "This man is talking about me, and about my interests".
- 2) The second half of each program should provide an incisive and clear statement of some aspect of the Christian faith as it bears on the topic presented.
- 3) The Christian faith must be presented free of all theological jargon, insofar as possible.
- 4) The presentation of the faith should be in positive terms, never attacking rival faiths openly.
- 5) An assumption throughout is that God's Word is most likely to be heard by the listener if we can enter emphatically into his indifference without condemning him for it.

